

FALL 2008

# Main Street

M O N T A N A

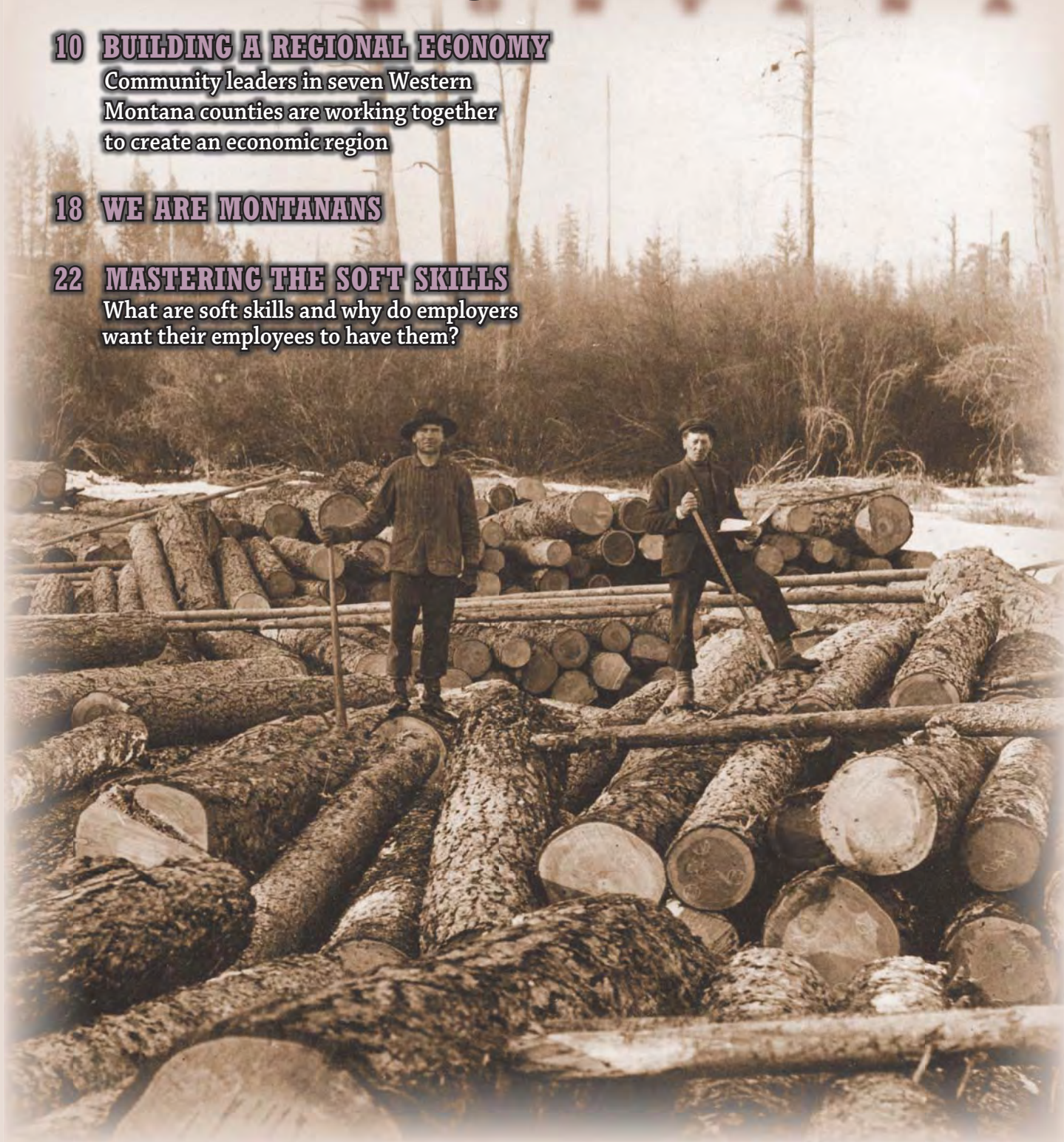
## 10 BUILDING A REGIONAL ECONOMY

Community leaders in seven Western Montana counties are working together to create an economic region

## 18 WE ARE MONTANANS

## 22 MASTERING THE SOFT SKILLS

What are soft skills and why do employers want their employees to have them?







*Photo Courtesy of the Museum at Central School, Kalispell*

## American Indians were the first inhabitants

of the Flathead Valley. The predominant tribes of the area were the Kootenai, the Upper Pend D' Oreille (the Kalispell Indians) and the Salish (the Flatheads). Traders and fur trappers made their way into the area in the early 1800's with Joseph House setting up the first fur trading post between 1810 and 1811. Homesteaders didn't come to the area until the 1870's and 1880's; most of them were immigrants from Europe who were looking to make a new start in a new land.

Transportation was and still is a major contributor to growth in the Flathead Valley. The arrival of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1883 spurred the area's growth. Passengers and goods were brought to the southern shores of Flathead Lake where steamboats transported both back and forth across the lake. The valley's first town was Ashley, named after one of the first settlers Joe Ashley. The town didn't survive and became a part of what is now known as Kalispell.

Agriculture was and continues to be one of the base industries in the valley. The land and temperate climate in the Flathead Valley were favorable for successful fruit orchards; apples and sweet cherries were major crops. Today the valley is known for its famous Flathead cherries.

The area also has an abundant supply of natural resources besides timber. The discovery of gold, copper, quartz, oil and coal attracted miners and prospectors to the area now known as Glacier National Park. Despite these other natural resources, timber has been one of the area's base industries for the last several decades. A more recent arrival is the tourism and recreation industry which brings in thousands of people who enjoy the area's natural beauty and bodies of water.

In this issue of Main Street Montana, our focus is on the diverse economy in the Flathead Valley and how that diverse economy has helped sustain the area through various economic cycles. We'll take a look at companies that are based in Flathead County and why they choose to stay. You'll also learn how community leaders are working to bring in new opportunities while preserving the natural beauty and the quality of life that make the Flathead Valley so attractive.

Keith Kelly, Commissioner  
Department of Labor & Industry



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## 2 COMMISSIONER'S LETTER

## 4 CONTRIBUTORS

## 5 NOMAD TECHNOLOGIES

Learn how four men went from guiding people down the river to founding a multi-million dollar technology company.

## 6 AMERICORPS IN FLATHEAD COUNTY

Volunteers are making a big difference in Flathead County, whether it's helping with the Community Garden, helping people winterize their homes, or spending the day as Dr. Seuss.

## 7 LABOR DAY REPORT 2008

Montana saw tremendous job and wage growth in fiscal year 2008.

## 8 DREAMCATCHERS

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development is helping economic development in Indian Country.

## 11 THE APPRENTICE: RUSSIAN BORN APPRENTICE EXCELS IN TRAINING PROGRAM

A young apprentice shares his story and talks about why he decided to forego the traditional post-secondary education.

## 12 FUELS FOR SCHOOLS

A new bio-fuel furnace is saving a Kalispell High School millions in energy costs and giving a local recycling company a boost in business.

## 13 CAMELINA FARMER

A farmer in the Flathead Valley talks about why he's including camelina in his crop rotation and how it's good for his bottom line.

## 14 TOP 10

Meet the top ten employers of Flathead County.

## 18 WE ARE MONTANANS

The Directors of Agriculture and Transportation talk about life in the Flathead.

## 22 TOTAL LABEL USA

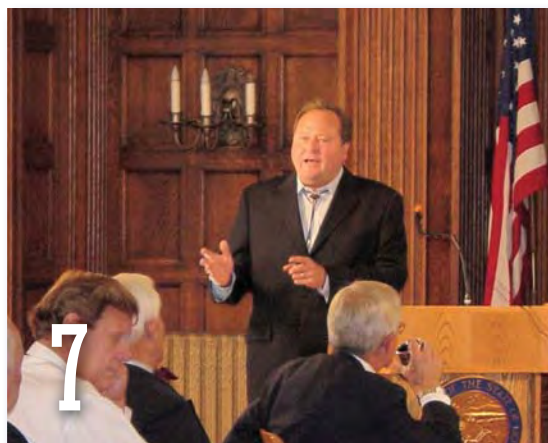
Did you know that some of the labels you see on a daily basis are made here in Montana?

## 24 PROVIDING HOUSING RESOURCES FOR YOU

The Department of Commerce is helping first time homebuyers and those who may be facing foreclosure.

## 26 MOTHERHOOD AND BUSINESS

What you need to know if you or your employee are pregnant.



*Front cover photo credit:*  
Logging on the Flathead River courtesy The Museum at Central School, Kalispell

*Table of Contents photo credits:*  
Pg. 7 - Governor Schweitzer presenting the 2008 Labor Day Report, Courtesy Casey Kyler-West

Pg. 12 - Wood Stump Pile for Glacier High School Fuels For Schools Program, Courtesy Casey Kyler-West

Pg. 14 - Travel Montana, Courtesy Donnie Sexton

*Back cover photo credit:*  
Travel Montana, Courtesy of Donnie Sexton





**The Governor's Office of Economic Development** serves to advise the Governor on policy issues related to economic development; lead the state's business recruitment, retention, expansion, and start-up efforts; and serves as the state's primary economic development liaison between federal, state, and local agencies, Montana tribal governments, private nonprofit economic development organizations and the private sector.



**Kalispell Job Service** focuses on developing and maintaining a high quality workforce system for the Flathead Valley by providing services to demand-driven businesses and job seekers, government officials and entities, the public, and to its own employees.

**The Governor's Office of Community Service** is a diverse, non-partisan, and Governor appointed body representing a broad cross-section of community service interests and statewide leadership in Montana. The Commission's administrative arm, the Governor's Office of Community Service (OCS), is a state agency funded by the Corporation for National and Community Service, the State of Montana, and various private donations.

**The Montana Apprenticeship Program** assists in setting up structured yet flexible training programs recognized by federal and industry standards designed to meet the specific needs of Montana employers through on-the-job training (OJT) and related classroom instruction.

**The Research & Analysis Bureau** gathers data, performs research and analysis, hosts the Montana Career Information System; produces career information on the state's industry and occupational employment activities such as wages, labor force statistics, and unemployment at [www.ourfactsyourfuture.org](http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org).



**Montana Department of Commerce, Montana Board of Housing Homeownership Program** assists low and moderate income Montanans in purchasing homes in the State of Montana. The Board issues tax-exempt Mortgage Revenue Bonds to provide below market rate funds to either purchase existing housing or new construction.



**The Human Rights Bureau** of the Department of Labor and Industry receives and investigates complaints of discrimination. The Hearings Bureau of the Department conducts hearings in discrimination cases. The Montana Human Rights Commission hears appeals of decisions by the hearings examiner and decisions of the Human Rights Bureau to dismiss cases.



**Editors:** Casey Kyler-West (Far Right)  
Margaret Ore (Top Right)

**Graphic Layout:** Casey Greenwood (Far Left)  
Stevie Harper (Bottom Left)

# NOMAD TECHNOLOGIES

Author: Shannon Hughes

**Decades ago, timber was the Flathead Valley's primary resource, and people flocked to this area in northwest Montana for the jobs the resource extraction industry provided.**

Today, the Flathead Valley's stunning natural surroundings are attracting (and retaining) a new breed of entrepreneur: the kind that could operate from Anywhere, USA, but choose communities like Kalispell for the quality of life they offer. One of the most exciting tech companies to emerge in the Flathead in the past few years is Nomad Technologies; a remote communications company that is making possible conversations from Montana's isolated field operations.

The four founders of Nomad technologies (brothers Will and Seth Schmautz, Shane Ackerly, and Clay Binford) are all in their late 20's or early 30's, and originally met while working as rafting guides during the summer. It was during one of these summers that they saw firefighters fighting wildland blazes lining up to use the few pay phones available in the area. As Will Schmautz tells it, a remote communications company wasn't exactly in the plans for the outdoor enthusiasts. "I don't think any one of us would have predicted that we would end up where we are today, doing what we are doing. In many ways, it is a dream come true. We get to live in one of the most beautiful places in the world, work with exceptional friends and family, and be active in a fast paced, quickly changing business environment."

That summer the four men came up with the idea to develop mobile vehicles equipped with advanced telecommunications equipment, and Nomad Technologies was born. Today, their vehicles and telecommunications solutions are deployed across the United States, providing emergency and remote communication capabilities to all levels of government and private industry.



*Senator Jon Tester, Will Schmautz, Seth Schmautz, Shane Ackerly and Clay Binford*

Nomad Technologies currently employs approximately 30 people, has multi-million dollar yearly sales, and is facing the challenge of tremendous growth while courting contracts from U.S. Army, federal and state agencies.

Schmautz says, "We face new challenges every day. Some are related to keeping up with changing technologies, some with finding adequately trained staff in the northwestern corner of Montana, and some are related to competing with large corporations headquartered in areas with better access to large municipal areas and the powers that be. In quite a number of instances, we have been encouraged to move our business to another, more central part of the US."

However, the company has no desire to leave the Treasure State. "We love Montana," says Schmautz. It goes without saying that this is exactly the kind of challenge many Montana businesses hope to experience.

Nomad Technologies requires employees skilled in everything from manufacturing, information technology, and engineering to marketing and sales. As Nomad continues to expand, it creates more job opportunities for talented individuals and valuable revenue for the state.

The Flathead valley is known across the nation and around the world for its incredible beauty and recreational opportunities. "When we started Nomad Technologies in this valley we call our home, we were inundated with individuals, businesses and government entities excited about helping us get started. By keeping our business in Montana,

creating solid employment opportunities, and offering only the best communication technologies available, we hope that we will be able to give back to the communities that have supported us so well," said Schmautz.

For more information on Nomad Technologies, visit their website at: <http://www.nomadtechs.com/>.



*Nomad Presentation*



# AMERICORPS IN FLATHEAD COUNTY

Author: Andee Dunick, Training & Marketing Officer, Governor's Office of Community Service

## In the Flathead Valley and across the state of Montana,

more than 8,800 people of all ages and backgrounds are helping to meet pressing community needs through 56 AmeriCorps national service projects. Serving with national and local nonprofits, schools, faith-based organizations and other groups, these citizens tutor children, build homes, restore the environment, respond to disasters and build nonprofit capacity.

The Governor's Office of Community Service administers the AmeriCorps State national service program in Montana. "The strength of AmeriCorps in Montana comes from the people who choose to serve and be civically engaged to create vitality and sustainability in their communities," said Linda Carlson, Executive Director, Office of Community Service.

AmeriCorps members have contributed significant time and energy improving Flathead Valley communities through initiatives such as the Montana Conservation Corps and Montana Campus Compact's Campus Corps program. During the 2007-08 academic year, MTCC Campus Corps successfully recruited 49 students from Flathead Valley Community College to serve in AmeriCorps.

Last fall, Montana Conservation Corps members collaborated with volunteers from Flathead Industries, an organization that creates opportunities for people with disabilities, to enhance the Kalispell Community Garden. For one full day, volunteers planted maple trees, cleaned the garden shed, removed almost a ton of organic debris and harvested more than 300 pounds of produce that was donated to the Flathead Food Bank.

The Montana Conservation Corps also participated in Governor Schweitzer's Warm Hearts Warm Homes Initiative last fall. Over a period of ten days, Montana Conservation Corps crews from Kalispell and Missoula completed 177 weatherization projects for low income homes in the Flathead Valley. Partnering with the Salish and Kootenai Housing Authority,

Northwest Montana Human Resources

and Human Resource Development Council in Missoula, volunteers installed window kits, weather stripping for doors, smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, water heater covers and energy efficient lightbulbs. Montana Conservation Corps has participated in the Warm Hearts Warm Homes Initiative for the last four years and is gearing up to help more people weatherize their homes for this upcoming winter.

During the 2008 tax season, five Flathead Valley Community College students and AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers partnered with Northwest Montana Human Resources, Parkside Federal Credit Union, and the Internal Revenue Service to provide "Volunteer Income Tax Assistance" (VITA) sites to Kalispell and Eureka. More than 200 tax returns were filed, totaling over \$180,000 in federal tax refunds.

Flathead Valley Community College student volunteers also put on the annual Seussville event held at the college this year. More than 30 volunteers were recruited to provide approximately 300 third-graders from around the Flathead Valley the experience of a day at college. The third-graders rotated through classes of math, art, music, reading, science and theatre, and enjoyed fun entertainment

during their day at college. "It is a great way for the campus to reach out to the community and expose these kids to college life at a very young age," said Team Leader Shelly Watkins.

These are just a few examples of the work AmeriCorps members are contributing to the Flathead Valley and other communities across our great state. It is the mission of the Office of Community Service to promote the lifelong civic engagement of all Montanans. Together, we can all make a difference.



*Flathead Valley Community College volunteer donned his Seuss finest to entertain the children*

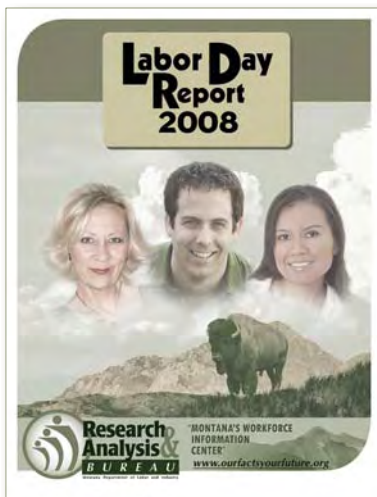


*A Montana Conservation Corps crew member installs a smoke alarm to help keep a homeowner safe*



*AmeriCorps members serving with Montana Conservation Corps and Flathead Industries volunteers*

To learn more about AmeriCorps and volunteerism, visit [www.mt.gov/mcsn](http://www.mt.gov/mcsn) or call 1-877-421-2323



## There's good news to report in the 2008 Labor Day Report.

The tremendous job growth Montana has enjoyed in recent years is continuing in 2008. In fact, Montana ranks third in the nation for job growth from January to July in 2008 for unadjusted payroll jobs, increasing employment from 434,400 to 457,500 - a 5.3% growth. Occupations requiring low and medium skilled workers are growing at a record pace. Despite the slight rise in seasonal unemployment earlier this year, Montana has consistently maintained one of the lowest unemployment rates among the fifty states and remains substantially below the national average.

Alternative energy is creating new opportunities for Montana's workforce. Clean energy developments, such as new wind farms, the Keystone Pipeline and the new proposed coal to liquids plant on the Crow Reservation promise to create new jobs and new opportunities for Montana's workers. "We have an unprecedented opportunity here in Big Sky Country, and we need to make sure our workforce is trained for tomorrow's jobs," says Governor Schweitzer. "Montana is leading the way in decreasing our dependence on foreign energy sources by creating American energy, produced by American workers in America."

These emerging industries, along with the new job growth in our existing industries, will require the workforce to have specialized training in new technologies and future developments. Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly says, "Business, education institutions, and those of us who represent workers all need to work together to ensure today's workforce is trained for tomorrow's jobs. The Department of Labor and Industry is poised to help achieve this goal through worker training partnerships like the Incumbent Worker Program and Apprenticeship Program."

Montanans are earning more. In 2007, the average wage in Montana grew by an unprecedented 5.3% to \$32,223, largely due to increased worker productivity and strong job growth. In addition, the minimum wage increased from \$6.15 to \$6.25 per hour in January 2008, as required by state statute. It increased again in July when the federal minimum wage increased to \$6.55 an hour. As the minimum wage increases, so do the wages of other workers in order to maintain a competency based pay difference.

The Labor Day Report is an annual report published by the Research and Analysis Bureau, a part of the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Workforce Services Division. This annual report presents an overview of economic conditions in Montana and provides insights into the Montana Economy.



Department of Labor & Industry Commissioner Keith Kelly

Copies of the Labor Day Report 2008, are available at [www.ourfactyourfuture.org](http://www.ourfactyourfuture.org) or by calling the Research and Analysis Bureau toll free at 1-800-541-3904.

## EXTENDED UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION: EUC 2008

Author: Margaret Ore

As part of an economic stimulus package, Congress passed the Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2008 just before leaving Washington, DC for summer recess. President Bush signed the bill on June 30, 2008. Governor Schweitzer inked the agreement for Montana the following day.

The basics of the legislation provide for up to 13 weeks of additional benefits at the same weekly amount as an individual's last regular UI claim. Those receiving benefits must have exhausted a Montana claim effective May 5, 2007 or later, and not be eligible for any further or new state benefits. State laws on availability for work and job seeking still apply. The last effective date for EUC claims is March 22, 2009. Benefits under this extension are wholly funded by federal dollars and are not charged to the Montana Trust Fund or employer's accounts.

"The extension helps those Montanans who are having a hard time finding employment in some parts of our economy and at the same time provide an economic stimulus to our Main Street businesses," said Department of Labor and Industry Commissioner Keith Kelly.

The Unemployment Insurance Division moved immediately to implement the legislation, which had been debated in various formats for several months. Current software was programmed to accept EUC claims, forms created for use, and staff trained on the specifics of the legislation. IT and claims personnel worked over the July 4th holiday weekend to complete the implementation with the first EUC claim processed on Monday, July 7, the first business day that claims could be established. 38,000 notices were mailed to potential claimants, explaining the regulations and possible eligibility for the extended benefits.

As of September 8, Montana residents have established 3,615 EUC claims and over \$3.7 million in benefits have been paid in those 9 weeks.

"Extended benefits are a lifesaver when the job market is tough," said UI administrator Roy Mulvaney. "They help get money back into the hands of those unemployed workers and their families most in need while helping to stabilize local business communities." Most experts estimate that every dollar of unemployment benefits turns over immediately in the community at least 2.5 times.

For more information about EUC, log onto [UI4U.mt.gov](http://UI4U.mt.gov).



## PAVING THE WAY

### The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) is the first national non-profit 501 (c) 3 corporation created and directed by American Indians, solely dedicated to developing American Indian economic self-sufficiency through business ownership. NCAIED supplies technical assistance and consulting services in all areas of business development to American Indian owned small businesses and tribal enterprise operations. NCAIED also works with federal government agencies, corporations and foundations to facilitate a business relationship between American Indian enterprises and private industry.

### History of the Organization

In 1969, a small group of seven American Indian community leaders visualized the alleviation of many American Indian problems by improved economic conditions. These dynamic individuals based in Los Angeles, California combined their efforts to start a grass roots economic development organization. Dedicated to assisting American Indian economic and enterprise development, their activities originally concentrated on urban populations of American Indians in California. Fittingly, they named the organization "UIDA" which stood for the Urban Indian Development Association.

UIDA underwent a name change in the late 1980's. Working with several influential U.S. Senators, the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development was born. The name change was reflective of the expanding scope of work and changing nature of Native role in urban and reservation-based business development. During the same timeframe the organization moved from California to Arizona and now owns a 10,000 square foot building in Mesa, Arizona which currently serves as the corporate headquarters.

The Montana office opened its doors in 2002 in Polson and recently moved to Kalispell. The office services the Billings BIA region, which is comprised of the eight reservations in Montana and Wyoming. While the attention is focused on the reservations, the NCAIED also works with Indian-owned businesses outside the reservations. Michael Buckman, owner of Buckman Research in Pablo, Montana says, "We have been working with the National Center since Buckman Research was formed and they have been a tremendous resource for the success of my company."

Lou Thompson of the NCAIED in Kalispell says the local office also pays great attention to tribal enterprises by reaching out to tribal organizations to offer their assistance. Tribal enterprises differ from Indian-owned businesses because tribal enterprises are owned and operated by the tribes themselves.

Throughout the years, the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) has evolved to meet the growing needs of the American Indian business community. One area that continues to develop is events,

The National Center produces six signature events annually, with the Reservation Economic Summit (RES) & American Indian Business Trade Fair being the premier event. RES is the largest and longest running American Indian business event in the nation.

After nearly four decades, NCAIED commands a strong position in Indian Country as the oldest and largest American Indian specific economic and business development organization in the nation. Nine offices staffed with over 50 employees supply management and technical assistance to Indian businesses and tribes nationwide. 1,400 clients operate in a variety of industries providing products and/or services to the commercial and government markets. Since inception, NCAIED has worked with approximately 80% of the tribes and assisted over 25,000 Indian enterprises while training over 10,000 tribal members in various aspects of business development. In total, clients have obtained over \$4.5 billion in contracts and financing.



*National Center Employees at a nationwide conference*



## American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (AIPTAC)

The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development (NCAIED) operates five American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Centers (AIPTAC). The American Indian Procurement Technical Assistance Centers are operated through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Defense, Defense Logistics Agency. The goal of the AIPTACs is to provide contract identification and procurement assistance to reservation based American Indian owned businesses and tribal enterprises throughout the United States where the program operates.

### The five AIPTACs are:

- Marketing & Procurement Services (MPSP)
- Northwest American Indian Development (NWAID)
- UIDA Business Services (UBS)
- Pacific American Indian Development (PAID)
- Procurement Learning for American Indian Nations and Societies (PLAINS)

The AIPTACs provide American Indian clients an understanding of government contracting and the know-how to obtain and successfully perform federal, state and local government contracts. At no cost, a wide range of assistance is available, from initial registrations through contract completion. Services include bid matching, technical assistance, resource and reference information, and marketing assistance to ensure success in selling goods and services to government agencies and prime contractors. The AIPTACs assist for-profit established



*Lou Thompson of the National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development*

businesses that are at least 51% Indian owned or tribally owned and located on or close to a reservation.

The relationship the Montana office has with federal and state agencies is an important aspect to the services they provide. Thompson advises those who are looking for subcontracting opportunities with large government contractors to work with the national center. "We can get businesses in touch with the big government contractors who are actively searching for Indian-owned small businesses. We've also got relationships with large private corporations, and those relationships can benefit Indian country as well," says Thompson.

If you are an Indian-owned business or tribal enterprise and would like to receive free technical assistance in building your business, contact the Kalispell office at 406-758-1361.

## 2008 Tribal Relations Report

Governor Brian Schweitzer released the 2008 Tribal Relations Report at the Board of Education meeting on the Salish and Kootenai College Campus in Pablo in September.

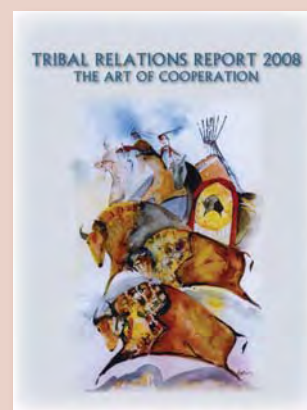
The report summarizes the major accomplishments of the State and the Tribes working together during the 2008 fiscal year. The report also contains a thorough appendix listing all of the state-tribal agreements that were in effect during the course of the last fiscal year.

"These achievements represent a long-term effort to build state tribal relations based on the principle that strong Indian Nations benefit all of Montana," Governor Schweitzer said. "I am proud of these accomplishments and committed to continuing these efforts in the months and years ahead."

Among the many achievements highlighted are the state-funded Tribal History Projects. These projects which were also unveiled at the Board of Education meeting are the culmination of two years of work under the leadership of the tribal colleges. The history projects will, for the first time, enable Montana public school students to learn the history of Indian peoples as told by the Tribes.

There were nearly 600 cooperative agreements and programs in effect between the State and Tribal governments during the fiscal year, covering every aspect of governmental operations, including economic development, the delivery of human services, environmental stewardship, cooperation on finance and justice issues, and education.

The full text of the report is available online, at <http://gain.mt.gov/reports.asp>.



# FOR AMERICAN INDIAN ENTREPRENEURS

# BUILDING A REGIONAL ECONOMY

Author: Casey Kyler-West

**The task: to turn Lincoln, Flathead, Sanders, Lake, Mineral, Ravalli and Missoula Counties into one economic region.**

Those charged with the task include key workforce development partners in each area of the region, including workers and industry as well as education, economic development, government and workforce training providers. The reason: The economy in western Montana is changing. According to the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, the number of workers employed in the wood products industries has dropped by 32% over the past 16 years and continues to decline.

In the short term, the crisis with the national housing market has exacerbated troubles in the wood industry; during the past year more than 418 jobs have been lost in the wood products industry alone. That not only impacts the wood products industry, but the ripple effects impact secondary businesses; for every 100 jobs lost, an estimated 46 jobs are lost in related fields.

Ironically, western Montana's economy has continued to grow and develop in spite of the staggering blow to one of its base industries. Employment in the seven counties has increased by 16.5% from 2001 to 2006, and wages have increased by 39%. Those who once worked in the wood products industry are now working in tourism, health care and technology. The diversification of the region's economy gives the region more stability, and as a result it is more resistant to cyclical changes.

In 2007, the Montana Department of Labor and Industry applied for a grant that assists regional leaders in developing a plan and strategies to revitalize and grow their economies. The Regional Innovation Grant (RIG) builds on what already exists within the region, and helps develop the talent pool that can support new and emerging industries.

The US Department of Labor awarded the RIG Grant to the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. The grant is helping the state by providing resources to identify key project partners and a core leadership group to help facilitate regional economic



*Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly addresses participants at the Kalispell RIG Grant Community Meeting*

transformation. The Department held a series of community meetings in July throughout the region to identify key community partners in the process and gather information about the issues. Labor Commissioner Keith Kelly said, "This is our chance to see what opportunities are out there in addition to the traditional wood products industry and how we can incorporate those opportunities into diversifying the region's economy."

After the community meetings, a comprehensive strategic meeting was held in Missoula in August. Representatives from business, industry, economic development, education and government met to discuss the issues facing the seven counties and how they can form an economic region. Rick Maher, President and CE of Maher and Maher, facilitated the meeting. He said, "Ultimately it's about you and the future of your community."

Marianne Roose, Lincoln County Commissioner agrees with Maher, "I think we have strength in numbers with change and the loss of major industries in rural Montana, we've had to look at diversifying. Education, health and sustainable wages play a key role; if we can't sustain our communities we aren't going to survive."

"Business, education and labor need to work together to develop the talent pipeline so that we can attract and develop new industries to the area and grow the region's economy," said Commissioner Kelly. Kirsten Pevey with Flathead Community College agrees, "Whatever we're doing at the community college has to match the needs of industry."

While participants also want the economy to continue to grow, they want to protect the region's natural resources, the environment and the quality of life, the things that make the region so attractive to people in the first place. "As a community which includes retiring workers, we're all here for the same reason: the value we place on our environment," said Pat Connell of Rocky Mountain Log Homes.

The final phase of the RIG Grant process will focus on building sustainability through identification and securing of resources.



*A breakout session at the Kalispell RIG Grant Community Meeting*



# THE APPRENTICE: RUSSIAN – BORN ELECTRICAL APPRENTICE EXCELS IN TRAINING PROGRAM

Author: Darrell Holzer

**In 1992, Vasiliy Gayvoroskiy made a life-changing decision** to uproot his family from their home in Kubain, Russia and relocate to Tacoma, Washington, in search of a better future for his growing family. At the time of the move Vasiliy's son Viktor was only five years old and focused on the things that all five-year-olds find intriguing – being a kid. Viktor attended public schools in the Tacoma area.

In 2000 another change was in the works for the Gayvoroskiys that would prove to be significant: at the invitation of family friends, they traveled to the Flathead Valley. While there, Vasiliy decided that Columbia Falls, Montana was where he wanted to plant permanent roots for his family. Viktor completed his teenage education via homeschooling and subsequently secured his GED at Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell.

It was now time for Viktor to get serious about his future, so he enrolled in the 2-year Building Trades Program at FVCC. During this time he became interested in electrical theory and practical application while building homes as part of the FVCC course requirements. This was also the time that Viktor's natural aptitude for the electrical trade was first recognized by one of the instructors – Master Electrician Dave Hudak, president and owner of Powerhouse Electric, Inc. of Kalispell.



Darrell Holzer



Powerhouse Electric: Dave Hudak (Master Electrician - owner), Viktor Gayvoroskiy, Justin Halverson (Journeyman) and Nick McCubbins (apprentice)

Hudak befriended Viktor and ultimately encouraged him to become an apprentice in Powerhouse Electric, Inc.'s state-approved registered apprenticeship & training program. Viktor readily agreed and started out in the 2-year residential wireman program. Once he had successfully met all the requirements of the 2-year program, his sponsor immediately asked that he be 'upgraded' to the full 4-year inside wireman program.

Viktor is now in the third year of his apprenticeship training program where he maintains a solid 'B' average in his classroom studies. When asked about the quality of his work in the field, his sponsor Dave Hudak says, "It's not only done right, it's a thing of beauty."

are doing what I'm doing. I'm just grateful for the wonderful opportunity that Dave and the apprenticeship & training program have given me." When asked about his long term plans he says, "I may get my masters license one day but there's no hurry as I really enjoy working with my co-workers and Dave."

Viktor's chosen career path appears to be turning into a family affair, as one of his brothers is currently enrolled in the 2-year Electrical Technology AAS program at FVCC with the primary goal of getting into a registered apprenticeship training program - just like his big brother.

The Montana Apprenticeship Program assists in setting up structured yet flexible training programs recognized by federal and industry standards designed to meet the specific needs of Montana employers through on-the-job training (OJT) and related classroom instruction.

Apprenticeship Programs can be sponsored by employers, employer associations, or labor/management groups (JATC's) that can hire and train in a real world working situation.

Currently there are over 660 sponsors (employers of apprentices) – Union & Independent and 1,500 registered apprentices working in 50 different occupations scattered throughout 53 of the state's 56 counties.

For more information on the Montana Department of Labor and Industry Apprenticeship Program call 406-444-2998 or log onto <http://wsd.dli.mt.gov/apprenticeship/>.

# HOME GROWN BIOFUELS

Author: Casey Kyler-West

## It's been a record setting year for gas and energy prices,

and as winter draws closer many across the state are worried about the impact on their pocket books. Schools aren't excluded and some, like Glacier High School in Kalispell, already have solutions to combat the high energy prices. The new high school, along with eight other schools across the state, is part of the Fuels for Schools program. This program uses biomass energy to heat the school.

The Fuels for Schools program is a result of the 2000 fire season. After one of those fires burned more than 350,000 acres and 70 structures in the Bitterroot valley, a Darby resident began to research ways to tie fire reduction with economic development. During that process he learned about biomass heat used in Scandinavia and Europe, and he discovered a number of schools in the Northeastern United States had been heating with wood waste for nearly 20 years. He brought the idea of using slash from fuel reduction projects to heat Darby's three public schools. A biomass boiler system was installed and began heating Darby's three schools in 2003, and from there the Fuels for Schools program was born.

Through a \$240,000 federal grant from the USDA and other funding sources, Glacier High School installed a biomass boiler while the new school was under construction. The biomass system cost \$550,000, but school officials estimate they will save \$7 million dollars over 30 years. "It's economics; we have biofuels readily available in this part of the country and the boiler will pay for itself in energy savings," says Chuck Cassidy, district Director of Facilities and Transportation. In the 2007-2008 school year, Glacier High paid \$87,044 for fuel. That included \$60,359.00 for natural gas and \$26,685.24 in wood chips. Compare that to Flathead High School, which paid \$206,189.00 for natural gas and you can see a \$119,145.00 difference in just one year between the two schools.

The biofuels are supplied by T.B. Gray, Inc., a local fuels reduction



Glacier High School



Glacier High School Boiler



Chuck Covey and Travis Gray, Flathead Wood Recycling



Tree Stumps & Wood chipping equipment

company based in Kalispell. Company owner Travis Gray was doing fuel reduction on a 100 acre parcel when he realized he had more wood than he could process with a small chipper. He started looking into wood grinders and flew around the country looking at different operations. He chose a horizontal grinder because it processes the material quickly and he can put the material right on a truck and ship it out. Now that he had a grinder, Gray had to find a permanent home for it, so with the help of a loan through the Small Business Administration, Gray was able to purchase 26 acres next to the county landfill and create Flathead Wood Recycling as a subsidiary company. He supplies the biofuels for Eureka's school as well.

Gray uses old tree stumps to grind for the school's boilers and currently has enough stumps on his property to heat Glacier High for a couple of years. Gray also grinds slash, wood pallets and has the capacity to grind leftover wood from construction projects that now ends up in the landfill. Gray believes more fuel reduction is needed, "There's plenty of material out there; we just have to go harvest it. We can help prevent fires by reducing the risk of fire hazards." Gray says he can see other schools using biomass heaters when it becomes time to update their current system.

An added benefit to using the biofuels is that burning wood is considered "carbon neutral". That means when trees are burned they release the same amount of carbon they pull out of the air as they grow, so there's no imbalance like there is when fossil fuels such as natural gas and petroleum are burned.

The Fuels for Schools program is a partnership between the U.S. Forest Service's State and Private Forestry Division and the state foresters of Montana, North Dakota, Idaho, Nevada and Utah. To date, Eureka, Troy, Kalispell, Thompson Falls, Philipsburg, Townsend, Dillon, Victor, Kalispell and Darby participate in the program; 22 other schools have completed the pre-feasibility assessment.



# GROWING CAMELINA IN THE FLATHEAD VALLEY

Author: Casey Kyler-West

**It's been called "gold of pleasure", false flax, German Sesame, wild flax and linseed dodder,**

but no matter what you call it, camelina is quickly becoming a crop of the future, or is it? Primarily known as a weed in North America, camelina has been around for centuries. Cultivation has been shown to occur in regions surrounding the North Sea as early as the Bronze Age. It declined as a crop during medieval times due to unknown factors, but has continued to co-evolve as a weed with flax, which can account for its introduction in to the Americas.

Despite its long history, camelina has not been one of the most commonly grown crops in the United States. The tide is turning, and more farmers are starting to take notice of camelina and its potential. Chris Fritz, a farmer in the Flathead valley, started incorporating camelina into his crops four years ago. "I felt like I was on the cutting edge because no one really knew what to tell us. We learned how to grow it and what do with it on our own," says Fritz. "I'd like to see what's going to happen within the next ten years—we haven't even touched this crop on a grand scale."

Fritz, a third generation farmer, became interested when he heard about the qualities of camelina and the fact that it didn't have to be trucked in from the Midwest like other crops. The annual stands between 30 to 90 cm tall and has branched smooth or hairy stems that become woody at maturity. It produces small, pale yellow or greenish yellow flowers with four petals; the seed pods resemble the bolls of flax and are roughly .7mm by 1.5mm. Because of its versatility, the seeds can be used as birdfeed, crushed into meal to feed other animals or crushed into oil to produce either edible or industrial oil.

What really impressed Fritz was the feed value; "Camelina has an incredible feed value of 350; compare that to hay which is usually around 150; add that to the fact that it's 40 percent protein which is right up there with soy and cottonseed. You know you've got a great product," says Fritz. That high protein value is really important, because he wants to keep raising cattle. Studies of camelina byproducts are under way to see if they are a potential feed source for chicken and fish as well. Animals aren't the only ones who can benefit from the nutritional value. The Omega-3 fatty acids are making more people take notice of the plant for human use. Once he started growing the crop, Fritz saw other benefits as well. Unlike other cash crops, camelina does not need



*Camelina after the harvest, before it's crushed*

herbicides or fertilizer, and according to Montana State University research, is well suited for marginal soils. That makes it cheaper to grow. "It costs us about \$80 an acre to grow camelina; other crops that we grow like canola, spring/winter wheat and malt barley cost \$200 an acre," says Fritz.

As gas prices rise, experts continue to look for alternative fuels. Camelina is being considered as an affordable source for biodiesel. While Fritz hasn't started making his own fuel, he's not ruling the possibility out. "Right now I'm selling the camelina to a couple of local guys who make their own fuel and if diesel prices stay where they are or go higher, I may not have a choice," says Fritz. Governor Brian Schweitzer is also a big believer in camelina and thinks that if more Montana farmers grow it, it will benefit the state in more ways than one. He says, "Camelina does well in Montana; it will help free us from our dependence on foreign oil

and bring in more money for Montana producers. This is a win/win situation for Big Sky Country." Right now camelina is grown in Montana, Slovenia, Ukraine, China, Finland, Germany and Austria.

While the cost to grow camelina is low, it's not a primary crop. Fritz and other producers are using it as a rotation crop. "It's a great summer crop, I use it to get the soil ready for

the other crops we grow," says Fritz. Along with camelina, Fritz also grows canola, barley and wheat. He says he can't really imagine doing anything else; "I don't think I can do anything different for a lifestyle and be happy, there's no better type of lifestyle out there. Watching your own family grow on your farm, having that experience—that's what I really enjoy."



*Flathead Valley Farmer Chris Fritz in a field of Canola*

# TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS

Super 1 Foods



Semitool



Walmart



Plum Creek



LC Staffing





**Big Mountain**



**Workplace Inc.**



**Glacier Bank Kalispell**



**Kalispell Regional Medical Center**



**TeleTech**



## FLATHEAD AT A GLIMPSE

*Author: Aaron McNay*

**Total population:** 86,844  
(Census, 2007)

**Median age:** 40.3 (Census, 2006)

**Median household income:**  
\$45,920 (Census, 2006)

**Average unemployment rate:** 3.5%  
(BLS LAUS estimate, 2007)

**Top five industries in terms of  
employment:**

- 1) Food Services and Drinking Places
- 2) Educational Services
- 3) Administrative and Support Services
- 4) Specialty Trade Contractors
- 5) Public Administration

For information on employment by industry, new businesses, labor market information, job projections, and hourly pay by occupation visit [www.ourfactsyourfuture.org](http://www.ourfactsyourfuture.org).

Or call the Montana Department of Labor and Industry's Research and Analysis Bureau (406) 444-2638, or mail P.O. Box 1728, Helena, MT 59624.

# IN FLATHEAD COUNTY

*Whitefish Mountain Resort (Big Mtn) photo courtesy Brian Schott. Wal-Mart, Teletech, Super1 Foods and KRMC photos courtesy Mark Waugh of the Kalispell Job Service. Workplace Inc., Semitool, Plum Creek, LC Staff and Glacier Bank courtesy of each business.*

*\*This list includes only private industry employers subject to Unemployment Insurance. Railroads and city, county, state and federal government agencies (including public school districts and universities) are excluded.*

# TOP 10 PRIVATE EMPLOYERS IN FLATHEAD COUNTY

## Glacier Bank



**Glacier Bank** opened its doors in Kalispell in 1952. Today there are 14 branches located throughout Western Montana, with 230 of the bank's 310 employees working in Flathead County.

Technology has played a key role in how **Glacier Bank** serves its customers. New advances have helped the bank better serve its customers by offering more online banking opportunities. This not only saves time, it also cuts down on paper and other resources when customers decide to use electronic statements rather than receiving them through the mail.

While banking is obviously **Glacier Bank's** business, giving back through community service is its mission. As to why the bank stays based in Flathead County, "It's the great folks whom we have the honor of serving," says Glacier Bank marketing representative Jennifer Winters.

## Kalispell Regional Medical Center



Kalispell's first hospital was built in 1895 by Mrs. Ella R. Webber, but it was too big and costly to run so it became a hotel and then apartments. It wasn't until a couple of locations and buildings later that the community had a permanent hospital. Kalispell General Hospital opened its doors in 1912 with 30 beds. The

Sisters of Mercy ran the hospital until 1973 when they sold it. The new owner changed the name to Kalispell Regional Hospital and moved it to its current location. In 1997, Kalispell Regional Hospital became the **Kalispell Regional Medical Center**.

Today, the hospital employs 2,020 employees. **Kalispell Regional Medical Center**, like the community, has continued to grow and with a new 330,000 square foot facility, it is able to treat patients not only in the Flathead Valley, but on both sides of the Continental Divide and as far north as Canada.

The advances in medical technology are constantly changing the way Kalispell Regional Center is able to care for its patients. It is also bringing new job opportunities to the community. While it isn't too hard to attract people to the community, a spokeswoman for the **Kalispell Regional Medical Center** says the key to retaining employees is more than offering a good salary. "We offer an excellent benefit package with progressive incentives like onsite daycare and access to our state of the art health and fitness center."

## LC Staffing



**LC Staffing** has been doing business in the Flathead since 1985, when it started as Labor Contractors Inc. Its mission was to provide temporary help to the timber companies located throughout the Flathead Valley and surrounding areas. Today **LC Staffing** provides temporary, temp-to-hire and direct hire placement in all areas.

Annually the company employs approximately 2,200 employees.

Kristen Heck, president of **LC Staffing**, says that while staying on the cutting edge of technology helps the company better serve its clients and candidates/employees, people are the first priority. "It will always be **LC Staffing's** goal to provide

personalized conscientious service. A member of our staff is available 24/7 to customers and employees alike. We have real people answering the phones and assisting at our front desk. We are in the people business...and people are our priority."

**LC Staffing** also provides more than 700 testing and training opportunities at no cost to help its employees qualify for the jobs they seek. A Montana-wide organization, **LC Staffing** is connected to the industries it serves and an active participant in its' local communities.

## Plum Creek Timber



In 1945, D.C. Dunham moved his lumber company from Minnesota to Columbia Falls, Montana and renamed it **Plum Creek**. When Dunham died in 1966 his family sold the business to Northern Pacific Railroad, which later became Burlington Northern. The railroad company spun off its non-railroad holdings, including

**Plum Creek** mills and timberlands, into a holding company. Today **Plum Creek** is structured as a Real Estate Investment Trust.

**Plum Creek** has roughly 1,300 employees in Montana and around 1,070 of those employees live in Flathead County. The abundance of timber and easy access to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe east/west rail line for shipping has kept the company in Flathead County. While that's good for business, it's the quality of life in the local community that keeps the company in the Flathead Valley as well.

Technology is changing the timber industry. **Plum Creek** is in the process of completing a \$2 million dollar data center, which will house all data for the entire company. **Plum Creek** spokeswoman Kathy Budonick says, "Technological changes, including data storage, communication and advancement within our plants, helps our company compete in today's highly competitive market place." Those changes also provide training opportunities for employees. "I encourage everyone out there to continue their education. We are always looking for a wide variety of people with a range of skills," says Budonick.

## Semitool



**Semitool** founder Ray Thompson brought the company back to Kalispell where he grew up in 1979. While the company's headquarters remain in Kalispell, it has locations and customers all over the world. **Semitool** is considered an electronic manufacturing company and some of its customers include Motorola, IBM, Texas Instruments and Advanced Micro Devices. The company employs 1300 people, and 785 of those employees live in Flathead County.

**Semitool** has been on the forefront of changes in technology and helps its customers develop new technology. The advances in technology have also made it easier for the manufacturing company keep in touch with its global locations and its customers. The constant change in technology allows **Semitool** to provide new training opportunities for its employees to advance their careers within the company. **Semitool** spokeswoman Vicki Billmayer says, "This is a global company with many new opportunities and challenges facing our workforce every day at **Semitool**; we promote from within."

Billmayer says that one of the most important traits an employee can have is dependability, no matter their educational or job





background. "One key essential we look for is dependability. Show up for work, stay focused. If you had perfect attendance at a fast food restaurant and want to learn production/assembly with **Semitool** and all the future opportunities that provides, we can teach you an interesting skill."

## Super 1 Foods



**Super 1 Foods** has been in Flathead County for 29 years. The grocery store chain has 14 stores located throughout the Pacific Northwest. **Super 1 Foods** employs roughly 1,000 people companywide and 340 of its employees call the Flathead home. "It's a wonderful community to do business in," says company spokesman Pete Pourroy.

With today's labor market, **Super 1 Foods** has had to get creative when it comes to recruiting employees. "It's not like it used to be, employers have to be flexible with scheduling, with families, etc..." says Pourroy. He also says job seekers need to be up front with their needs when looking for a job.

Technology has changed the way grocery retailers do business. Previously, retailers like **Super 1 Foods** would call their orders in. Now it's all electronic and the store is better able to track its inventory. The new technology also allows **Super 1 Foods** to track requested items quickly and efficiently.

## Teletech



**Teletech**, a global process outsourcing company with operations in 18 countries, has 55,000 employees worldwide; nearly 500 of those employees call Kalispell home. The company's services include: complex customer management, sales and marketing, training, recruiting staff and workforce management, payroll administration, loan processing, benefits and claims administration, vendor management and e-commerce.

**Teletech** believes strongly that human capital is the key to its success. That human capital includes both customers and employees. The Human Capital Document on the company's website says, "It becomes proportionately that much more important not only to recruit and hire effectively, but to train effectively, to connect employees with the organization's goals, to engage them in the realization of the company vision, and to ensure that they are provided the right process and technology to enable them to achieve that vision."

In October 2007, **Teletech** in Kalispell received a \$400,000 grant from the Montana Department of Commerce to create an additional 80 jobs in the Kalispell area over the next two years.

## Wal-Mart



**Wal-Mart** is not only one of the largest employers in Flathead County, but in the state of Montana as well. As of August 2008, the total number of people employed by **Wal-Mart** in Montana is 4,809. That's just the number of people who work directly for the retail giant.

**Wal-Mart** also supports 8,034 supplier jobs in the Treasure State. In FYE 2008, the retailer spent \$32,763,211.00 for merchandise and services with Montana suppliers.

**Wal-Mart** named Kalispell Junior High teacher Frances McAllister

as Montana's 2007 teacher of the year. With 15 stores in Big Sky country, **Wal-Mart** was able to give \$836,045.00 in cash and in kind donations to local communities throughout Montana.

## Whitefish Mountain Resort



It's no secret that the area incorporating Whitefish and Glacier National Park is the recreational capital of Montana. **Whitefish Mountain Resort** plays a key role in the area's recreational history. In 1937 the Whitefish Lake Ski Club obtained a special permit to build cabins and trails in the Hell Roaring Creek Region that is now **Whitefish Mountain Resort**. The first T-Bar lift was built ten years later and in 1949 the first chalet was erected just in time to host the U.S. Alpine Championships.

Today the resort has roughly 100 year round employees and is among the ten largest resorts in the U.S. Because of its location, **Whitefish Mountain Resort** and its staff do what they can to lessen their footprint on the environment through recycling, use of biodegradable chemicals and cleaners, noxious weed program, public transportation system, and other efforts. The Summit House Restaurant, at the 7,000 ft. summit, has a \$25,000 air filtration scrubber system to eliminate food odors that may attract bears and other wildlife into the area.

Like most resorts, **Whitefish Mountain Resort** has a limited number of full time positions. This poses a unique challenge for retaining employees and attracting seasonal employees. While the location is a major asset, the resort tries to offer competitive wages and work to meet employee needs to retain them or bring them back the following year.

## Workplace Inc. and Workplace Resources



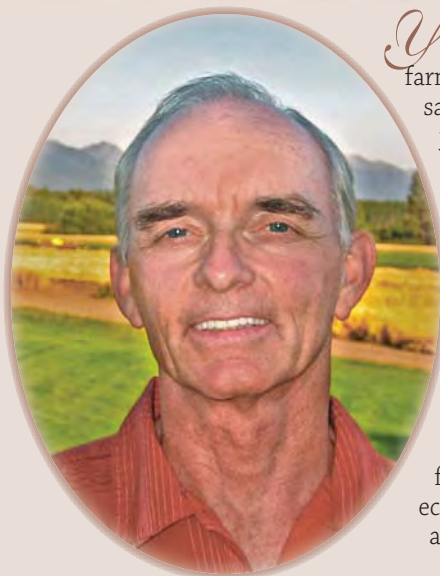
Kalispell native Shelley Loutherbach came back to the Flathead Valley after living elsewhere for 18 years. Before she started **Workplace Inc.**, a staffing service and professional employer organization, Loutherbach worked in the staffing industry for nine years.

With 620 employees, **Workplace Inc.**, has recently expanded its services to include a full line of personal and commercial insurance with its new corporation **Workplace Annex, Inc.** Loutherbach believes the key to retaining employees is creating a workplace environment that challenges them personally and professionally. She also believes, "Every job opportunity has the potential to train you in areas that accumulate to career level competency when employees are clear about who they are, what they like, and what they are capable of doing."

Technology has increased **Workplace Inc.'s** ability to meet customer expectations, increased the volume of business the company can effectively take on and decreased overhead for small business owners over the past decade. Standards for the working environment are important and **Workplace** has been innovative in offering safety programs, accurate payroll and reporting, certified training for high risk working environments and managing risk with innovative employee benefits and insurance options. Loutherbach says, "The challenge of creating job opportunities and helping individuals find employment in this unique job market is rewarding."

# WE ARE MONTANANS REFLECTIONS

Author: Ron Zeller



*Director Montana Department of Agriculture  
Ron de Yong*

*You* could say that agriculture is in Ron de Yong's blood. His father built the family farm house east of Kalispell when de Yong was nine months old. "I love agriculture," he says. "I love the family base it provides. There's a lot of hard work involved, but it's just really a good place to raise a family."

Agriculture has changed greatly since de Yong bought his family farm in the early 1970s. Armed with a master's degree in economics from the University of Montana, he more recently taught agricultural policy and economics at Cal Poly State University. There, he invited some of the nation's top agriculture thinkers to speak to his classes. Farming and ranching are poised for even bigger changes in the coming years, he says, which is why he jumped at the chance a year ago to become Montana's Director of Agriculture.

"What wouldn't work 10 years ago is going to work now because the mega trends are changing," says de Yong. Computers make it easier for buyers and sellers to find each other, eliminating the need for a middle man. Fuel prices are changing the economics of transporting food and fuel. "It no longer makes sense to grow as much as you can for as cheap as you can and ship it thousands of miles."

Consumers are becoming more health conscious. They want to know where their food is coming from, which begins to tilt the balance back toward more local production and processing of food. "We're going to go from greater and greater consolidation to greater and greater diversity. This will empower family farms because people will be able to identify who raised the food on their tables."

Adding new crops, and some that have not been grown commercially in Montana for many years, helps meet local demand. Rotating crops helps lessen the need for costly chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Adding oilseed crops for the production of biofuels can reduce our dependence on foreign oil, cut down on transportation costs and help break disease cycles that arise from planting the same crop too frequently.

International demand, high fuel prices and the resulting cost of grain are also changing the economics of the cattle business, which supplies about half of Montana's gross farm income. Cattle breeders have identified genes that will enable livestock fed totally on grass to be lean, tender and tasty, which will create new opportunities in Montana.

Flathead County's growing population creates challenges for farmers, but also opportunities, de Yong says. "More people means more opportunity to sell our crops locally. Farmer's markets are becoming increasingly popular because people can see where their food is coming from."

In the future, innovative farmers will make more money identifying a market and filling a need than by growing a commodity and taking the market price. "You can't quite do it the same way you did before. The new ballgame is going to be half marketing and half production." Farmers also will need to understand political and global issues that can affect market opportunities.

"The challenges are opportunities," de Yong says. "We have some big problems, but big problems also give you big opportunities."



*Ron de Yong and family - his sons Adam and Dustin, wife Dee and daughter Jenae*



# WE ARE MONTANANS REFLECTIONS

Author: Charity Watt-Levis

In 1986, Jim Lynch made his way to the Flathead Valley from Spokane, with the intent of spending a few years growing a newly purchased business. Some 22 years later, there is no other place he can imagine calling home.

"I've raised my three children here. This is my home. I'd never consider leaving," he says. In fact, he's lived in the valley for longer than he's lived anywhere else.

And he's done more than just live in the Flathead. While his asphalt paving, ready mix, sand and gravel business, Nupac, flourished, he became a very active member of the community. He spent ten years on the Kalispell Chamber of Commerce board of directors serving terms as president and as chair of the Chamber's Transportation Committee. He has been an active member of Rotary and served on the board of Flathead Industries.

Lynch's enthusiasm really comes out when the cause involves youth. When asked why, his answer is simple. "I enjoy it," he says. "I think youth are the life of a community. They are the community's future. We need to take care of them."

Lynch helped the Kalispell Police Department to establish the first DARE program in Montana and raised funds with Rotary to establish a drug task force. He's also served on the area's DUI task force.

In 2002 Lynch sold his business. In 2005 Governor Brian Schweitzer appointed Lynch as the Director of the Department of Transportation. While his job is Helena, his home and family remain in Kalispell, where he commutes on the weekends. As the Department's Director he also serves as the Governor's Representative for Highway Safety, a job he doesn't take lightly.

"The crash statistics are not just numbers to me. We are injuring and losing too many Montanans on our roads, especially in the Flathead" he says. "Getting everyone to buckle up and to never drive impaired would save so many people."

Lynch emphasizes the importance of traffic safety at every chance. During his tenure at MDT, the department was one of the first in the nation to complete a comprehensive traffic safety plan, one now used as a model for many states.

"We work hard to engineer safe roads, but that's just one side of traffic safety," he says. "Education, enforcement and emergency response are just as important in saving lives."



Director Department of Transportation  
Jim Lynch



Jim and his wife Pam at Big Mountain

Lynch works with community members and leaders toward transportation solutions that are a fit for the community. During his tenure at MDT, local communities are participating in the transportation planning process more than ever. "We know that transportation solutions are not a one size fits all proposition," he says. "A good transportation system enhances quality of life."

As for life in the Flathead, Lynch and his wife of 33 years, Pam, plan to be there for a very long time. He believes there is plenty of space in the valley to accommodate the growth that is projected. If that growth is carefully managed, it will provide economic growth resulting in better job opportunities for the area's youth so they can build careers and raise families in their hometown.

# FLATHEAD COUNTY: MONTANA'S TOURIST HOTSPOT

Author: Aaron McNay

Located in Northwest Montana, Flathead County is the second fastest growing county in the state, growing by nearly 17% from 2000 to 2007. Flathead County is Montana's fourth most populous county, with an estimated 86,844 residents in 2007. It is easy to understand why so many Montanans settle in Flathead County; with Flathead Lake to the south, Glacier National Park to the North, and over 90% of the county in undeveloped forestland, wilderness, or agricultural land, Flathead County provides endless natural beauty and recreational activities.

Each year, the natural beauty of the Flathead area draws in a record number of visitors. With mountains for skiing to the west, forests for hiking to the north, and a lake for boating to the south, there are recreational opportunities for nearly everyone. These diverse recreational opportunities have lead to Flathead County's Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation sector becoming the third largest Recreation sector in the state, employing around 1,350 workers in 2007.

The fast population growth has driven economic growth in consumer-based industries. The largest sector in the county's economy is Retail Trade, with employment of 5,850 in 2007. Construction, Health Care and Social Assistance, and Accommodation and Food Services are other significant industries in the county. Combined, these four sectors account for nearly half of the total employment in the county.

Construction continues to play a significant role in Flathead's economy, responding to the county's rapid

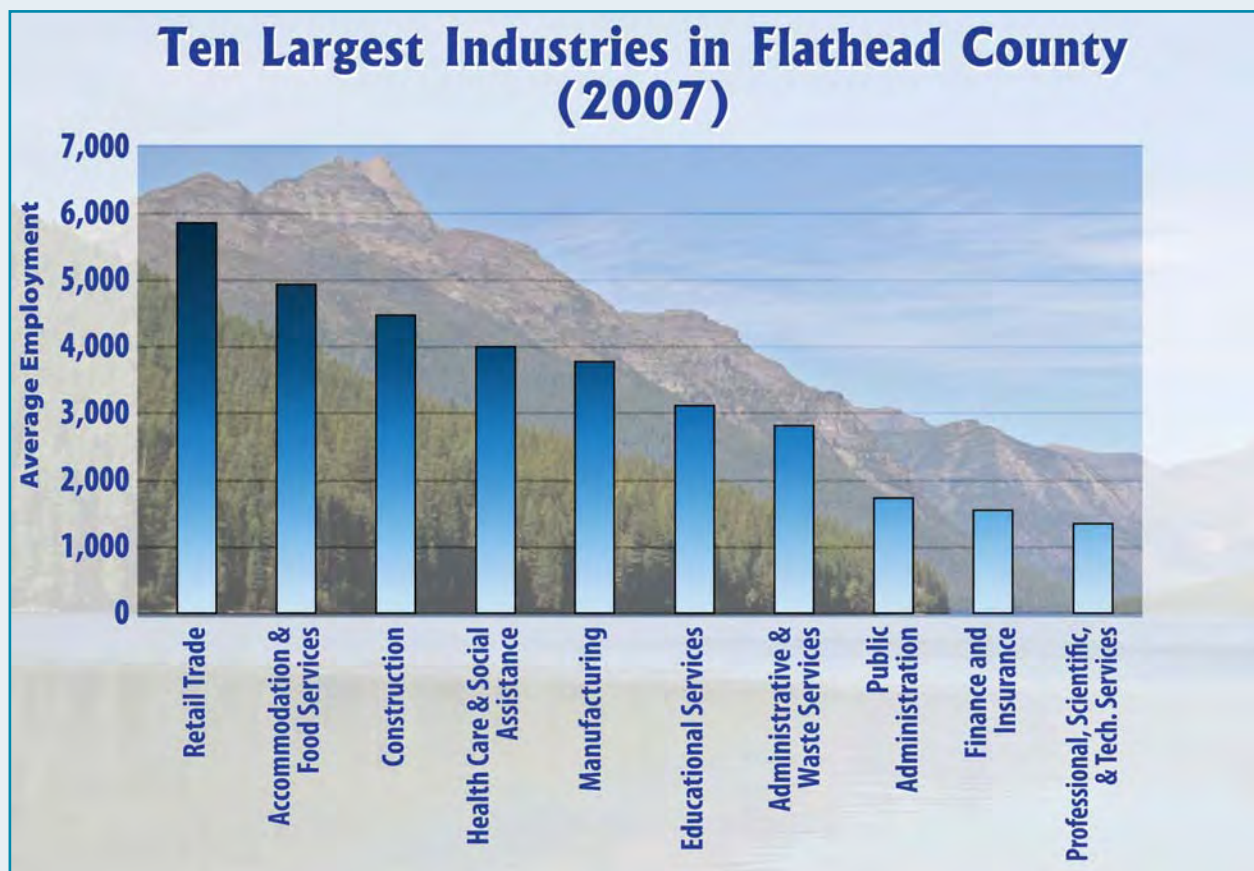
population growth. With over 4,400 people employed in 2007, construction is one of the largest sectors of employment in the county and is considered an above average paying job with an average annual wage of \$37,600.

Per capita income in Flathead County increased at an average annual rate of 6.4% since 1969, slightly above the statewide growth of 6.2%, resulting in an income level that is slightly above the state as a whole. However, the average wage per job of \$31,345 in Flathead County is slightly below the state average wage of \$32,223. Wages in Flathead County also grew more slowly than in the full state with growth of 4.6% compared to statewide growth of 5.3% from 2006 to 2007. The slower wage growth may be due to the above average unemployment rates and declining timber industries of the surrounding counties.

In 2002, Flathead County had a total agriculture output of over \$30 million, placing Flathead County as the 27th largest seller of agriculture products in Montana. Crop sales accounted for more than 60% of the total value of the agricultural products sold. Flathead is also the second largest producer of Christmas trees in the state and one of the top 100 Christmas tree producing counties in the country.



Aaron McNay





# CONSOLIDATING SERVICE

Author: Mora McCarthy



Mora McCarthy

**Five years ago, a group of eight business assistance providers and economic developers in the Flathead Valley** decided they could better serve their customers if they were all located under one roof. These partners joined together with the conviction that regionalization of business resources, one-stop access, and the co-location of programs is the best way to serve the business sectors of Northwest Montana. From there, the Flathead Regional Business Center (FRBC) was born. The FRBC offers comprehensive business services that include programs focused on small business development, government marketing, business expansion and retention, community development, recruitment, human resources, workforce training and manufacturing assistance.

"Having our Flathead Regional Business Center team working with us has helped us succeed," said Wanda Hinzman, co-owner of Distinctive Countertops and Cabinetry. Wanda and her husband Randy have owned the Flathead-based business for more than 20 years. "It goes without saying," says Hinzman, "that we have experienced a lot of change." Randy Hinzman has completed the NxLevel Series offered by the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located at the Flathead Regional Business Center. He says, "We are thankful for the resources and business to business information available to us from our Flathead Regional Business Center."

The FRBC is all about relationships; being next door to each other supports the networking and convenience that have nurtured dynamic collaboration. "Business clients see it, once they experience the assistance with less investment of their time, effort and energy," says Lad Barney, former director of the SBDC. "It's easier for the partners to work together; we're able to leverage resources and increase productivity."

An incredible network has been forged throughout business, education and government in the Flathead and this network extends beyond the physical boundaries of the FRBC. The Kalispell Chamber of Commerce is pursuing expansion plans for the physical building site.

## Onsite Partners include:

- Flathead Convention and Visitor Bureau
- Flathead One-Stop Workforce Center, Business Resource Consultants
- Flathead Valley Community College Workforce Training
- Kalispell Chamber of Commerce
- Kalispell Chamber of Commerce Foundation
- Kalispell Small Business Development Center
- MT Manufacturing Extension Center, Field Engineer
- Northwest Business Expansion & Retention
- Procurement Technical Assistance Center
- The National Center for American Indian Enterprise Development

## Offsite partners include:

- City of Kalispell Community Development Department
- Montana Department of Commerce, Regional Development Office
- Montana West Economic Development & the Flathead Port Authority
- SCORE Counselors to America's Small Business
- Montana World Trade Center

# TOTAL LABEL USA

Author: Casey Kyler-West

**Accessibility, reliability and velocity;** three words Don Farris, Chief Executive Officer of Total Label USA, uses to describe his business philosophy. "You need to be accessible to your customers, be reliable so that they trust you to get the job done, and be able to meet or beat your customer's deadlines. If one of our customers calls and says we need labels first thing tomorrow morning, they know we can do it," says Farris.

Located in Whitefish, Montana since 2004, Farris had been based in Tennessee for the previous 34 years. Farris says, "We moved because we had a fundamental belief that American industry was at a watershed point of change. It used to be that industry was located wherever the workforce was; what's happening now in this more mobile society is, I believe, that you're going to have to locate your facility where the workforce wants to be-not where they already are." Farris became interested in the label industry in the late 1960s, when he went to work for a label company after leaving the Army. "Labels are everywhere, food, pharmaceuticals, health and beauty aids, chemicals; even your car has 300 labels in it." Farris started his own small shop in 1970 and the rest is, as they say, history. He's even responsible for inventing the booklet label that you see on chemical and pharmaceutical products.

With its headquarters in Whitefish and two plants in Tennessee, Total Label USA designs, produces and ships labels around the country and the world. Farris says his clients are always surprised when they hear he's based in Montana and when they ask him why, he invites them for a visit. He says once they come and see the facility, the area and the quality of employees, they understand. "We want to be a family run operation where we know each person, their spouse, their children, their parents; we want to get to know these people and we want to motivate them as individuals. That's the key to our success and it's more fun that way," says Farris. That's one of the reasons that Farris will not take the company public. "In an economic downturn like we're seeing right now, public companies have to cut people, but in a family owned business that's the last thing you cut because you personally live with and adore them." In order to keep costs down, Total Label USA makes its own label plates. This not only saves money, it also saves time, because the company



*The Farris Family  
Christopher Farris, Janet Henderson and Don Farris*

can start making labels for a customer as soon as the plate is ready, instead of having to wait for it to be shipped from another company.

The move to Montana did not come without challenges. One of the biggest obstacles was bringing a highly technical industry into an area where timber, agriculture and tourism dominate. In order to have employees who could perform some of the technical duties such as graphic design and work with the printing press, Farris had to recruit people

into the area. "Recruiting people into Whitefish, Montana, is just about the easiest thing there is," says Farris. But while Farris has no problem bringing people to Whitefish, he wants to create more opportunity for young people in the area to stay. "What we want to avoid is the continued export of smart young people out of Montana after college."

Although the company has only been in Whitefish since 2004, it has already experienced growing pains and quickly outgrew the 16,000 square foot plant that was originally constructed. In March of this year, the company moved into its new 60,000 square foot multimillion dollar facility located right down the road from the original plant. With the capacity to print up to 50 miles of labels per hour, there is still room to grow. Currently there are 50 employees at Total Label USA; Farris expects to have between 100 and 150 employees in the next ten years.

As the company continues to grow, Farris says he wants to make a difference in the Whitefish community. "It's one thing to put a business somewhere just because you think you can make some money. It's quite another to put a business somewhere because you think you can make a difference and make money." As a result Total Label USA belongs to both the Whitefish Chamber of Commerce and Montana West Economic Development.

Total Label USA truly is a family business. Farris works with his son Christopher, who is the Operations Manager, his daughter Janet Henderson, who is the Administrative Manager, and her husband Scott, the Sales Manager. The Farris family not only works together, they live together. Each family has a house built on the 800 acre property owned by the family, so there's no commute to work. "We plan to be in business forever," says Farris.



*A label machine at the Whitefish Facility*



*Total Label USA Employees*



# MASTERING THE SOFT SKILLS: EXPANDING OUR CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH CHANGE



Deborah Snellen

**As the world of business becomes more competitive and the endeavor to maximize our human resources becomes increasingly challenging, one area of competencies is getting greater attention in the field of training and development.**

Categorized as “soft skills”, we find such traits as responsibility, self esteem, sociability, integrity and ability to make ethical decisions, teamwork, leadership, diversity, and creativity. These are attributes that make it possible for our businesses to excel, yet they are difficult to quantify and often difficult to develop.

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Soft skills pose a challenge for managers. There are a variety of reasons for this:

- Since soft skills are hard to quantify, outcomes of training and development efforts are hard to articulate.
- Most soft skills are broad and can be interpreted in many ways. A manager may be thinking of one thing and the employee may see the skill in a different way.
- Many people fail to relate the need for a range of soft skills to the overall needs and goals of the business.
- Some soft skills cause us to wonder if we are born with that skill or if it can be learned along the way.

Let's take “leadership,” for example. Certainly, leadership is a soft skill and we want our employees to exhibit leadership in their work. However, leadership is hard to quantify. You would have to define it in a way that makes sense for your work environment. Do you want employees to have a vision of their own for success in their respective department or do you want them to champion the overall vision of the organization? Do you want employees to challenge the status quo with new ideas or respect the history and traditions of your organizations? Do you want employees to do more listening, speaking, or more of both? You have to define what you mean. Is leadership a skill that we are born with or can we learn how to practice leadership? These same questions arise, regardless of the soft skill we are trying to develop in our employees.

Here are a few tips for developing soft skills with your employees. We will continue to use “leadership” as our example, but these same tips will apply regardless of the soft skills that might be your focus.

- ✓ Define behaviors that are indicative of high performance for a particular competency. If that is leadership, what exactly do you want to SEE someone doing? What actions could you document and describe that are indicative of leadership?
- ✓ Use the life experiences of your employees to help them understand what you mean. If you are trying to explain the competency of leadership, ask employees to talk about how they see leadership, when they have experienced leadership as a follower and what made that experience successful. If we can relate the behaviors we desire to behaviors that the employee has seen or experienced, our chances of developing that competency are higher. Employees will have a reference point.
- ✓ Build soft skills into your performance appraisal system. Too often we only appraise performance that is quantifiable and we leave the “fuzzy” stuff to a short discussion that can be confusing to the employee. If you have clearly defined behaviors, you can easily incorporate a competency into the performance appraisal system. And what gets measured gets done. If you want leadership, you have to include that competency in the performance appraisal process.
- ✓ Use soft skills and their respective definitions to help employees understand your corporate values and make those values come alive. Corporate values are often “fuzzy” just as soft skills and competencies. We need to define our corporate values by behaviors that match the definition. Strengthen your ability to develop the soft skill of leadership by telling your employees specifically how leadership from everyone will allow your organization to live out your organization's corporate values.

Following these suggestions might take more time than developing traditional attributes or definitive skills that we seek from our employees. However, taking the time to do so will provide your organization with a greater capacity to deal with change and competitive challenges. That is something that we cannot afford to dismiss. Defining how a particular soft skill will benefit our business and getting that definition into behavioral terms is the key to developing this critical set of competencies.

# PROVIDING HOUSING RESOURCES FOR YOU

Authors: Penny Cope and Marissa Kozel

## The Montana Board of Housing and its partners support education and counseling for first-time homebuyers

"Owning a home is the true American dream, but it is also a major financial responsibility," said Governor Brian Schweitzer. "Getting a good financial education is the important first step to creating a successful homeowner."

The Montana Board of Housing is proud to partner with NeighborWorks Montana to offer a variety of classes, including:

- Homebuyer Education Classes - an eight to nine hour series covering all aspects of the home buying process, including valuable home maintenance information. Classes are open to everyone.
- Financial Fitness - covers information on budgeting and credit.
- Individual Homebuyer Planning - specific information for individuals/families seeking assistance with credit issues, finding the right loan or other information about home ownership.

NeighborWorks Montana maintains a website at [www.nwmt.org/homebuyerred.htm](http://www.nwmt.org/homebuyerred.htm) that lists all of their upcoming homebuyer education classes and counseling offered at numerous locations across Montana, or you can call them at 1-866-587-2244.

## The Montana Board of Housing has \$30 million of new bond funds available for mortgage loans!

The Montana Board of Housing now has \$30 million available for mortgage loans for low- and moderate-income, first-time homebuyers. These 30 year mortgage loans have a low fixed rate of 6.25 percent.

"These new mortgage loans are available at a lower rate than other loans currently in the market," said Anthony Preite, director of the Montana Department of Commerce. "This is great news for Montanans planning for their first home."

The Montana Board of Housing had been unable to sell bonds at a rate lower than the market mortgage rate since March, because of the effects of the subprime crisis on financial markets. This changed, due in part to the federal Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008, which was enacted into law in late July. The Act permanently excluded interest income earned on Montana Board of Housing bonds from the Alternative Minimum Tax, making the bonds attractive to a wider group of investors and bringing down the cost.

"Now that we're back in the game, we're taking a moderate approach to selling bonds, to ensure that Montana Board of Housing mortgages remain competitive in the market," said Bruce Brensdal, member of the Montana Board of Housing.

For more information call 406-841-2840, go to [www.housing.mt.gov](http://www.housing.mt.gov), or contact a local lender who works with MBOH programs.

## Are you facing foreclosure? Help is available.

If your family is facing foreclosure, now is the time to look closely at what you owe and what you earn. Eliminate unnecessary spending and reach out for help if you still can't meet your financial obligations. Taking action now can help you protect your family from the loss of your home. Contact your lender as soon as you realize that you have a problem.

Montana Board of Housing partner, NeighborWorks Montana, also offers foreclosure prevention counseling and loans. Please contact NeighborWorks Montana at 1-866-587-2244 or go to [www.nwmt.org/keepingyourhome.htm](http://www.nwmt.org/keepingyourhome.htm).

For tips on avoiding foreclosure visit the US Department of Housing an Urban Development at [www.hud.gov/local/mt/homeownership/foreclosure.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/local/mt/homeownership/foreclosure.cfm).



Penny Cope & Marissa Kozel



Governor Schweitzer presents \$500,000 to the HOME Program for the Creation of Manufactured Housing at Mountain Springs Villa in Red Lodge, Montana in January of 2008

## The new Montana Housing Search website and call center is available now for renters and for owners/landlords.

MTHousingSearch.com provides free, real-time rental housing information to people looking to list or locate rental property. The website was developed by the Montana Department of Commerce Housing Division, the Montana Board of Housing and Socialserve.com.

In addition, for anyone who does not use a computer, there is a 24/7 toll-free bilingual call-center which offers top notch customer service to both rental housing searchers and rental housing providers.

Go to [www.MTHousingSearch.com](http://www.MTHousingSearch.com) or call 1-877-428-8844 to see for yourself. You may call the Montana Department of Commerce Housing Division at 841-2840 if you have any questions.



# SERVING IS MORE THAN A JOB

Author: Laura Gardner

**In today's tight labor market it seems like finding a job should be easy.** Employers should be lined up at your door wanting to hire you, but unfortunately it isn't always that easy. Employers also have to get creative and find new ways to attract employees. At the Flathead Job Service One Stop Workforce Center, it's our job to bring employers and potential employees in Flathead County together. We do what we can to help make sure that job seekers have the resources they need to help them find the perfect job. Whether it's someone trying to find their first job, or a worker who has been laid off and is trying to find a new job in a different field, we endeavor to make the process as seamless as possible.

The Flathead Job Service is about more than trying to help people find jobs. Helping our community on and off work is very important to us. Throughout the year we help the last and the least in our community.



*Staffers building a wall*

a mentor to a local family and helped build their home. The family had a special needs daughter in a wheelchair, and they needed wide doors and hallways in their new home. On June 14th, 2008, Roberta, along with 15 staff members, grabbed their hammers and went to work. They came together to put up the walls and donate work hours to the family.

The following week on June 20th, 12 staff members and their families got together to participate in the Relay for Life. They had a great time walking around the local high school track to raise money for the American Cancer Society.

Through these examples you can see that we at the Flathead Job Service One Stop Workforce Center are dedicated to helping the people in our community. Whether it's in our capacity as job service specialists or as individuals, we want to do as much as we can to make our community the best it can be for everyone.



*Flathead Job Service One Stop Workforce Center Staff*

In January our office hosted a Red Cross blood drawing. Staff members rolled up their sleeves and not only gave blood, but made sure that members of the community who came in had the refreshments they needed.

A call for help went out in April from the Flathead Food Bank; the organization was one week away from running out of meat. Staff members went to work collecting money; \$40 worth of hamburger was purchased and another \$30 in cash donations was contributed to help people in need of food.

Terri Haueter and Sara Bigelow took time away from their busy work schedule to help the United Way Citizens Review Advisory Board in April. They each spent an afternoon listening to requests and distributing funds to different organizations within the United Way Agency.

During Roberta Diegel's term in Leadership Flathead, she volunteered to help Habitat for Humanity. Roberta was



*Staffers raising a wall*

# MOTHERHOOD AND BUSINESS

Authors: Marieke Beck and Kimberly Howell

**For many women, finding out that they're pregnant is both exciting and scary.** Along with all the changes to their bodies and the new role they will play in a few months, many women worry about telling their employer. Some for good reason- in fiscal year 2008, the Montana Human Rights Bureau received 37 claims of pregnancy discrimination.

In addition to the general discrimination laws that protect women based on gender, there are two specific provisions inside the Montana Human Rights Act (MHRA) that seek to protect the rights of pregnant women. Except in very limited circumstances, it is unlawful for an employer:

1. To refuse to hire a woman because she is pregnant;
2. To treat a pregnant employee differently in terms, benefits, or compensation for employment because she is pregnant;
3. To discharge an employee because of her pregnancy;
4. Refuse to grant a reasonable leave of absence for such pregnancy;
5. To deny to an employee who is disabled as a result of pregnancy her rightful compensation; or
6. To require that an employee take a mandatory maternity leave for an unreasonable length of time.

**See Mont. Code Ann. 49-2-303 and 49-2-310**

Furthermore, upon signifying an intent to return to her job after her reasonable leave of absence, an employee must be reinstated to her original job (or to an equivalent position with equivalent compensation and benefits) unless, in the case of a private employer, the employer's circumstances have so changed as to make it impossible or unreasonable to do so. See Mont. Code Ann. 49-2-311

Below are several questions and answers that we frequently respond to at the Montana Human Rights Bureau.

**Q.** I own a busy restaurant and I expect a lot of my employees. A woman that is obviously pregnant stopped in to apply for an open

waitress position. I refused to give her an application because I know the position requires a lot of standing. I truly felt that it was in her best interest not to apply. Can I refuse to hire a woman because she is pregnant?

**A.** An employer cannot refuse to hire a pregnant woman because of her pregnancy, because of a pregnancy-related condition or because of the prejudices of co-workers, clients or customers.

**Q.** I have an employee that brought a note from her physician requesting 12 weeks off for maternity leave. Do I have to grant 12 weeks off for maternity leave? I thought six weeks was considered "reasonable".

**A.** Section 49-2-310(2), MCA, provides that it is unlawful for an employer to refuse an employee a reasonable leave of absence for her pregnancy. But, what is "reasonable leave"? This is determined on a case by case basis. What is reasonable for one employer may not be reasonable for another, depending (in part) upon an employer's resources. There is guidance in the administrative rules. See Admin. R. Mont. 24.9.1203. The rules state that an employer must apply a standard that is at least as inclusive as the standard applied when leave is granted for other valid medical reasons. Consequently, as an employer if you have allowed other employees to take 12 or more weeks off to recover from a temporary disability (e.g. recovering from a heart attack), a pregnant employee's request for 12 weeks could be considered a reasonable request.

**Q.** I have a pregnant employee that only works part-time, is she protected under the Montana Human Rights Act?

**A.** Yes. The provisions of the Montana Human Rights Act protect all employees, regardless of the number of hours that the employee works.

**Q.** When does maternity leave start? Does it only begin after a woman has had a child?

**A.** By rule, "maternity leave" means any leave of absence granted to or required of an employee because of such employee's disability due to pregnancy.

## Advised Accommodation for Breastfeeding Mothers

The 2007 Legislature passed a law requiring public employers (government offices and schools) to provide the following accommodations for breastfeeding mothers. Although this legislation does not require private employers to provide these accommodations, it is advised.

- Provide a written policy that supports and encourages the practice of breastfeeding, accommodates breastfeeding related needs of employees, and ensures that employees are provided with adequate facilities for breastfeeding or the expression of milk for their children.
- Make reasonable efforts to provide a room or other location in close proximity to the work area, other than a toilet stall, where an employee can express breast milk.
- Provide reasonable unpaid break time each day to an employee who needs to express breast milk for her child; unless this would unduly disrupt the employer's operations.

It is unlawful discriminatory practice for any public employer:

- a) To refuse to hire or employ or to bar or to discharge from employment an employee who expresses milk in the workplace; or
- b) To discriminate against an employee who expresses milk in the workplace in compensation or in terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, unless based upon a bona fide occupational qualification.

**See Mont. Code Ann. 39-2-215**

If you have additional questions related to pregnancy or breastfeeding contact the Montana Human Rights Bureau at 1-800-542-0807.





# Logger's Dream



Photo Courtesy of the Museum at Central School, Kalispell

## **The Base Line: Housing Application Workshops & Consolidated Plan Public Meetings**

City	Date	Time	Location
Missoula	Oct. 29	8am - 4:30pm	Wingate by Wyndham Conference Room
Great Falls	Oct. 30	8am - 4:30pm	NeighborworksMT Conference Room

## **The Main Line: MBOH Lender Training "MBOH-101"**

Date	Time	Location
Nov. 12	9am - 11am	Online Meeting Using GOTOMEETING
Dec. 10	9am - 11am	Online Meeting Using GOTOMEETING

42,000 copies of this public document were printed at an estimated cost of \$.38 each for a total of \$15,903.30 for printing and \$.00 for distribution.

## **The Drop Line: MBOH Lender Training "Purchase-101"**

Date	Time	Location
Nov. 13	9am - 11am	Online Meeting Using GOTOMEETING
Dec. 11	9am - 11am	Online Meeting Using GOTOMEETING

For more information on MBOH classes you can log onto [www.nwmt.org](http://www.nwmt.org) or call 1-866-587-2244

## **The Dog Line: Workers' Compensation Educational Conference on Utilization and Treatment Guidelines**

Date	Location
Jan. 13, 2009	Helena

## **Governor's Award for Safety and Health**

Employers large and small across the state are taking the lead in creating safe work environments for all their employees and putting into action the WorkSafeMT initiative. The Department of Labor and Industry wants to recognize this year's winners of the Governor's Award for Safety and Health for their commitment to making safety a priority and a value of their everyday business. This year's winners are:

- Large Public: Missoula County Public Schools, Missoula
- Small Public: Ravalli County Road and Bridge Department, Hamilton
- Large Private: ConocoPhillips Billings Refinery, Billings
- Small Private: Transbas Inc., Billings
- Mine: Rio Tinto Minerals, Three Forks

This year marks the first inaugural presentation of the Governor's Cup for Excellence in Workplace Safety and Health Awards. The Governor's Cup Award recognizes safety and health initiatives which have gone above and beyond the call of duty by making safety a part of life, both at work and at home. The winner of this year's Governor's Cup for Excellence in Workplace Safety and Health Awards is: ConocoPhillips Billings.

Congratulations to all the winners and thank you for making safety one of your core values.

**Check out our extended menu of events on**  
<https://app.mt.gov/cal/html/event?eventCollectionCode=doli>



*Montana*  
**Department of Labor and Industry**

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